

# PRIMO

*in your community*  
Profiles from Quality Health Care



## PRIMO Pipeline

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) established the Primary Care Resource Initiative for Missouri (PRIMO) in 1993. PRIMO was designed to provide incentives to increase the number of primary medical care professionals and health care delivery systems in areas of need within the state. The program has expanded to include dental, behavioral, and nutritional health care professionals. PRIMO has developed a pipeline approach, focusing on the needs of students from high school through graduate school, and addressing the needs of communities by building clinics and services to assure students have a place in their community to practice.

Key to the success of this program is identifying, supporting and placing individuals most inclined to

pursue primary medical, dental, behavioral, or nutritional health care specialties in areas of defined need. A DHSS-approved area of defined need is a geographic area, facility, or a population group that has been determined by DHSS as experiencing a shortage of primary medical, dental, or behavioral health care providers or has inadequate access to health care providers. This includes those areas designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA). Statistical research reveals students pursuing health care careers are heavily influenced to return to the communities they grew up or where they received clinical training. DHSS promotes the “grow your own” philosophy that was the basis for the development of the PRIMO program.

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# Dental Care Close to Home

*A wide-eyed Adamaris Ramirez, 5, fought off tears as she turned back to her mother for reassurance. After a nod from mother, Claudia Ramirez, and kind words from dental assistant Mendy Bailey, she was off to her first dentist visit.*

Chris Stewart, executive director of Katy Trail Community Health, was confident Adamaris would be put at ease in the chair as Dr. Nicole Medley would likely use a pair of sunglasses to do the trick.

Adamaris was among the first 46 patients that Katy Trail Community Health's dental program saw in its opening week on November 17, 2008. Claudia Ramirez said she would have had to take Adamaris, along with her brother and sister, to Marshall or Columbia to see a dentist requiring them to travel 30 to 70 miles from her home in Sedalia.

"It's very good for the kids," Ramirez said of the clinic by way of an interpreter. "A lot of kids' teeth are bad, and they can fall out. They need to be protected."

Across the waiting room, the Adams sisters from Smithton waited for their dental check-up as their father, Ryan Adams, filled out paperwork. Adams said his wife is a patient of Katy Trail's medical program, and she found out about the dental services for children. The opportunity prompted the first dental visit for 2-year-old Holly Adams, even though she doesn't have any problems.

"It's better to get them in now, instead of later," Ryan Adams said.

Preventive care is the focus of the dental program, so patients are primarily children. The opening of the dental program is the culmination of a goal set by the original board.

## About Katy Trail Community Health's Dental Program

The dental clinic is a 5,300-square-foot addition built onto the medical clinic. Four exam rooms are up and running in the dental clinic, which has the capacity for four more. The clinic is completely digital, with an electronic dental record and digital radiology. The clinic is equipped with both purchased and donated dental equipment. Medley, the dental director, and three dental assistants staff the clinic.



KTCH has agreements with area Head Start agencies to provide dental services to Head Start Children in Pettis County. They also initiated a referral program with Pettis County schools to ensure that children with emergent dental needs are seen quickly.

Katy Trail Community Health just signed a contract with another dentist, who started her employment in June 2009. PRIMO dollars supported the development of the KTCH dental program. Dental Director Dr. Nicole Medley is a PRIMO scholar. Grants from PRIMO FY 2006 through FY 2009 assisted in providing funding to purchase dental equipment for the new facility.

Since opening in November 2008, Katy Trail Community Health dental has served more than 2,000 patients, mostly children. KTCH's plans include the opening of a dental program in Benton County.

For more information about Katy Trail Community Health, go to [www.katyhealth.org](http://www.katyhealth.org). For appointments call, Sedalia, 660-826-4774 or Warsaw, 660-438-2717.



# Promoting PRIMO Professionals

Each month PRIMO highlights an individual who is working in a Federally Qualified Health Center in Missouri. The following interview segments are with two such individuals. Both say their experience with PRIMO led them where they are today.



“Beginning ten years ago, our board of directors initiated a plan to implement a dental program, so to be able to fulfill that plan 10 years later is just a dream,” Stewart said.

**Dr. Katy Friedbach** began her medical career in Morgan County and says she greatly enjoyed working with the citizens there. She is now a physician with the Community Health Center of Central Missouri, out of Jefferson City.

## How has the PRIMO program benefited you?

“I would say just almost short of pivotal in my entire career. I started getting support from PRIMO my first year of medical school. So for my entire training and into residency, even, I received support from the PRIMO program. And it’s the kind of support I encourage people to look into.”

## What would you say the benefits for a community are by having PRIMO scholars around?

“I think you get a group of providers who are committed to taking care of patients in areas that sometimes are not the most sought-after location. Throughout my training I was committed to family practice and I really had an interest in rural medicine. I focused my training with that in mind. Having the PRIMO scholarship program allowed me to get a good sense throughout my training of what I may end up doing.”

## What is the appeal of working in a rural area?

“Rural practice is wonderful. The patient population is underserved so when you come you have a ready-made practice. There isn’t a lot of competition for those patients, so they’re thrilled to have you. They really embrace you into the community.”



**Dr. Justin Garner** grew up in St. Louis. He graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and works for the dental department at Swope Health Center in Kansas City.

## How does the community benefit from getting students who have been in the PRIMO program?

“I think they benefit a great deal. [My classmates and I] already had an initial desire to treat those who are heavily dependent on public health facilities. We were already ‘pre-set’ with the issue, so it was the ideal place.” Dr. Garner’s return to an underserved area reflects the “grow your own” PRIMO model.

## Did the community you grew up in influence your decision to become a PRIMO scholar?

“Yes, because the patients that I see lie within the same economic bracket as those that I grew up with. You know, I went to school with a lot of kids who seem like they mirror the children I see as patients.” Dr. Garner’s observations parallel PRIMO’s objectives of increasing access to health care for all individuals regardless of socio-economic standing.



# Handwashing Quiz



*December is National Handwashing Awareness Month. Take this quiz to find out how much you know about how disease can spread with a simple handshake.*

1. True or False: using alcohol-based hand rubs has been shown to reduce overall infection rates.
2. In the United States, how many school days are missed by students because of the common cold alone?
3. How long does it take to properly wash your hands to prevent the spread of infection?
4. How many individual bacteria typically live on the skin between your fingertips and elbow?
5. True or false: germs on your hands die within 30 minutes.

**Answers:** 1. True (source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) 2. Nearly 22-million 3. 15 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" or the "Alphabet Song." 4. Between 2- and 10-million 5. False. They can live up to three hours.



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